

Development of Small Group Roles



Chapter 8



Functional Approach



Definition

Focuses on the communicative behaviors used by group members during group meetings

Small Group Roles



Two things to consider when defining the word role

1. Communicative statements group members make sends messages about who they are and what function in the group they serve
2. Group members assign roles to each other

Small Group Roles



Definition of role

A role is a repeatable pattern of communicative behaviors that group members come to expect from each other

General Propositions of Roles



General Propositions of Roles



Roles are learned behaviors

Role behavior is affected by self-concept

Group members play multiple roles simultaneously

General Propositions of Roles



As a result of playing multiple roles simultaneously

1. Role rigidity occurs when group members limit themselves by assuming only one or two roles
2. Role conflict occurs when two or more members vie for the same role
3. Role strain occurs when members are required to assume a new role and they are reluctant to do so

Role Development



Role Development



A member can learn to play a role in two ways

1. The first way is to engage in information seeking
2. The second way is through feedback, which is the response a listener gives to a speaker about the speaker's behavior

(Both apply across the lifespan)

Role Development



Types of feedback

Positive feedback reinforces the idea that the behavior should continue

Negative feedback helps group members identify weaknesses and make improvements

Ambiguous feedback offers little information to the group member

Three Classifications of Roles

Formal,
Informal,
& Deviant



Formal Roles



Definition

Specific role positions assigned to one group member through appointment or election as part of the group's structure

Formal roles are the leader, recorder, and critical advisor

Formal Roles



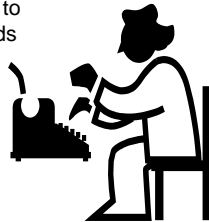
The leader is responsible for moving the group towards its goals and convincing external audiences the group is achieving or has achieved its goals



Formal Roles



The recorder takes the minutes of meetings and records any other actions of the group that need to be stored as permanent records



Formal Roles



The critical advisor challenges group members' ideas in a constructive manner



Informal Roles



Definition

Emerge through group member interaction

Any group member who has the appropriate communicative and group skills often communicates in such a manner to fulfill the role function

Informal Roles



Five informal roles

- Task leader
- Social-emotional leader
- Information provider
- Central negative
- Tension releaser

Informal Roles



Task leader

Is a take charge type of group member who assumes the responsibility of making sure the group's discussion moves along on the task

Informal Roles



Social-emotional leader

Is concerned with the building and maintenance of group member relationships

Informal Roles



Information provider

Exercises the ability to synthesize information and contributes information in the form of facts, statistics, examples, and quotations

Informal Roles



Central negative

Challenges the group's decisions

Informal Roles



Tension releaser

Uses humor strategically to ease tensions in the group that may arise over role conflicts, personality clashes, or problems with the decision-making process associated with the task

Deviant Roles



Definition

Destroy the group's productivity and success because the communicative focus centers on an individual member rather than on the best thing for the group

Deviant Roles



Ten deviant roles

1. The airhead purposely acts stupid so other members will complete the task
2. The aggressor attacks other members or the task
3. The blocker interferes with the group process by disagreeing frequently

Deviant Roles



- 4. The clown makes a fool of herself by acting dumb or saying stupid things
- 5. The dominator monopolizes group time and tries to show superiority
- 6. The egghead acts as if he is smarter than other members
- 7. The recognition seeker seeks attention by boasting

Deviant Roles



- 8. The self-confessor expresses personal feelings unrelated to group's goal
- 9. The special pleader introduces irrelevant information and supports it
- 10. The whiner complains about having to participate in the group task

A Final Note



To play the role which is appropriate in a group, it is important to remain flexible

Role flexibility refers to possessing the skills and abilities needed to engage in a variety of group member roles

A Final Note



Three ways to maximize role flexibility

1. Resist role rigidity
2. Place group goals above personal goals
3. Identify ways to contribute to playing group task roles and group building and maintenance roles

A Final Note



Task roles

- The elaborator
- The energizer
- The information giver
- The information seeker
- The initiator
- The opinion giver
- The opinion seeker
- The orientor

A Final Note



Building and maintenance roles

- The compromiser
- The encourager
- The follower
- The harmonizer
- The interpreter
